

15 Feb 1979
Wave

Frost and Steam

Engine 100 of the Heber Creeper rumbles through snow and frost on its way to the Creeper's winter film debut. A film crew from Multi-Media productions was shooting scenes for "The Year of the Dragon" on the Creeper Friday and Saturday. The T.V. special will appear on N.B.C. in April.

Heber Creeper Keeps Chugging Along

By ROD COLLETT

Driving through Provo Canyon on any given day in the spring, summer or fall, a resident or tourist may find the canyon crowded with fishermen, cars or those viewing the wonders of Bridal Veil Falls. One attraction that has caught the fancy of over 250,000 people since 1971 is the Heber Creeper, with its steam locomotive, high pitched whistle and turn-of-the-century coach cars.

This investment into the past is the creation of mainly one man, Lowe Ashton, a Wasatch County resident, who is President of the Heber Creeper. He says that

6 Million Visit Utah Park Areas

A record 6 million visitors were attracted to the 12 National Park Service areas located in Utah during 1978.

The 6,185,094 figure represents an increase of 266,319 over the 1977 total.

Contributing to this 4.5 percent climb were increases at 10 of the 12 areas in the state. Natural Bridges National Monument and Cedar Breaks National Monument each recorded slight decreases for the year.

Visitation to park areas of the Rocky Mountain Region of the National Park Service, which is comprised of Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and a portion of Arizona, also increased during the last year. The regional increase amounted to 1.75 percent, bringing the total to 29,154,745 for 1978.

there are very few steam locomotives left in the entire United States and that the 18½ miles of track between the main terminal in Heber City and the stop off near Bridal Veil Falls is historic in itself. "Past enthusiasts have often tried to bring a steam railroad to Utah but for many reasons were unable to do so," he said. "We recognized that the long-term future of Wasatch County was in recreation oriented attractions and that a scenic steam railroad is a nice entity to attract attention, is very identifiable and has the backdrop of the beautiful Heber Valley and the vista of the backside of Mt. Timpanogos," he said.

He said the idea of having an historical steam railroad traversing

between the Utah County and Wasatch County areas compliments the heritage which Utah's pioneer past has produced. "We compliment the state's mix of recreation features and are not competitive to it," he said.

Mr. Ashton said much of the original track which existed from Heber City to Provo is now either torn up or has been replaced with more modern rails. "There are still a few of the old rails and timbers left in several sections along the 18½ mile route of the Heber Creeper," he added. According to Mr. Ashton, some of these older sections date back as early as 1899. "One of the saddest aspects about the section from Bridal Veil Falls to Provo, which was in existence as early as two years ago, was that such corridors for public access needed to be preserved," he said. He said the present line from Heber City to Deer Creek Dam is under the

control of the state parks department, while the Heber Creeper railroad subleases the rest of the track to Bridal Veil Falls," he stated.

Mr. Ashton emphasized that the greatest asset that the Heber Creeper has is the alpine scenery.

"We have a greater amount of variety of topography in a shorter distance than any other railroad which we might consider competitive in the United States. Part of the spectacular nature of the scenery includes the high mountain peaks, cold running rivers, Deer Creek Lake, the pastoral valleys, sage brush-covered hills and the falls," he said. He cited one steam railroad operation in Colorado where the beautiful landscape is almost monotonous. "From the time you leave the station to the finish, the sameness of the scenery is plain, although it is beautiful, the terrain is just a rugged canyon beside a river," he declared.

Anybody who has ever been aboard the Heber Creeper might be aware that much of the same scenery could be observed in Provo Canyon. But once you leave the shadows of the canyon one can look and see the backside of Mt. Timpanogos, which seems to rise from the valley floor as majestic as any mountain to be seen anywhere in the Swiss Alps, on the cover of National

Geographic or on a Walt Disney special. An added bonus for outdoor fun seekers is the abundance of wildlife from herds of mule deer to fish which are always being pulled from the upper Provo River, which is considered a blue-ribbon trout area, especially German browns. But in sheer variety, from the desert sagebrush to the rugged cliffs above

Bridal Veil Falls, a ride on the Heber Creeper is well worth an afternoon.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect about the daily run of the Heber Creeper in the spring, summer and fall is the main engine which runs on coal and oil. "In the early heyday of the railroad in Utah, the line which was between Provo and Heber City had two runs per day. In fact some of the old railroad schedules we have indicated that some of the BYU students which lived in Heber City commuted to Provo for school each day at one time," he said.

Although the Heber Creeper is now closed during the winter, Mr.



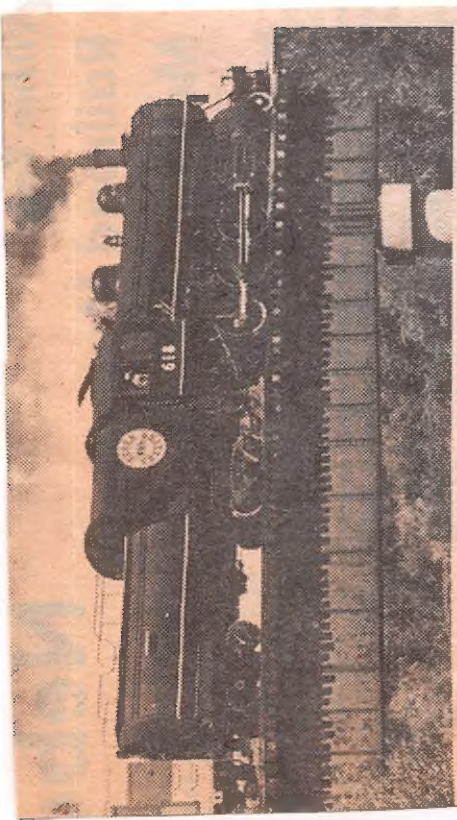
THE SHRILL of a whistle and black smoke from a steam locomotive such as the Heber Creeper is a rare sight in Utah. The train runs during the fall, summer and spring pulling several coaches on its winding path through some of the most beautiful scenery along the Wasatch Front. The Heber Creeper is one of the many tourist stops in Wasatch County which serves as a growing attraction for Utah's tourist industry.

Ashton said things are shaping up to experiment on a limited winter running. The cars which we do have can be pulled by a steam locomotive in the warm weather, but it is hazardous in the winter to do so," he said. "We have obtained an old diesel electric engine which can pull the cars on a limited run for charters, Christmas specials and those occasions which warrants the run of the Heber Creeper," he said.

He said there is a total of 25 cars, engines, and cabooses on the terminal lot in Heber City. "We have four coach cars, four U.S. Army hospital cars, various diner and baggage cars, three

cabooses, flat and box cars and a steam crane," Mr. Ashton said.

He stated that almost half of those who have been aboard the Heber Creeper have been from out-of-state. "When information is sent across the country telling about Utah's tourist attractions by the travel council, we have several pieces of literature sent along as well in that packet," he said. "These days, steam railroads are a rarity in this country, especially in Utah where the Heber Creeper is the only one," he said.



THE HEBER CREEPER is shown crossing one of the many bridges on its 18½ mile trip between Bridal Veil Falls in Provo Canyon and Heber City. The steam locomotive is the only one of its type to run in Utah and the scenic journey offers a spectacular view of mountains, streams, sagebrush covered hills and the long ride around the popular Deer Creek Reservoir. Over 250,000 people have ridden on the train since 1971.